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Contact-type image sensor for generating electric signals corresponding to an image formed on a document.

Light-shielding layers (11a, 11b) are adhered to the lower surface of a glass plate (4), spaced apart from each other and defining a slit having a width of L. An array (5) of rod lenses is located below the glass plate (4), such that the optical axes of the lenses pass through the slit. The lower surface of the glass plate (4) is generally covered, and exposed via the slit only. Hence, the leakage of lights reflected from points near a reading position (P) into each photoelectric conversion element (7) is minimized, whereby the element (7) outputs a pixel signal faithfully representing that part of the image which is located at the reading position (P).

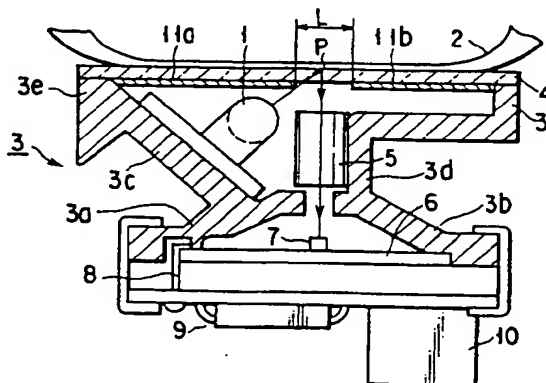


FIG. 1

EP 0 557 891 A1

The present invention relates to a contact-type image sensor which has photoelectric conversion elements for converting the light reflected from an document into electric signals corresponding to an image formed on the document, and more particularly to a structure which reduces the leakage of unnecessary light into the photoelectric conversion elements.

A contact-type image sensor comprises a light source, an erect-image focusing optical system, and a line sensor. The light source applies light to an document. The optical system, such as a rod-lens array, receives the light reflected from the document and focuses an erect image on the light-receiving surface of the line sensor, in magnification of one. The line sensor has a linear array of photoelectric conversion elements, which has a length substantially equal to the width of the document. The photoelectric conversion elements convert the image focused by the optical system, into electric signals. In other words, the line sensor generates electric signals (image signals) which correspond to the image formed on the document.

The rod lens array comprises a number of rod lenses juxtaposed in the same direction as the photoelectric conversion elements are arranged, with their optical axes aligned parallel to each other. Each of the rod lenses has two focal points located at the same distance from the midpoint on the axis of the lens. The document is placed in the plane containing the first focal point of every rod lens, whereas each photoelectric conversion element is located at the second focal point of the corresponding rod lens. Hence, the document opposes the photoelectric conversion elements, with the rod lens array interposed between the document, on the one hand, and the conversion elements, on the other hand.

Fig. 7A illustrates the positional relation among each rod lens 71, the document 72, and each photoelectric conversion element 73. As is evident from Fig. 7A, the light reflected from a given point P1 on the document 72 (i.e., the point corresponding to one pixel) is focused by the rod lens 71 on the light-receiving surface of the conversion element 73, which is located at point P2 opposing the point P1.

If rod lens 71 had ideal characteristics, the light focused at point P2 should be exclusively the light reflected from the point P1 on the document 72. Referring to Fig. 7B, the light A reflected from a point P3 spaced part from the point P1 should be focused at a point P4 which is symmetrical to the point P3 as is indicated by the arrow B, after passing through the rod lens 71.

In fact, however, the rod lens can hardly have such ideal characteristics, due to the limited manufacture precision. A stray light is inevitably gen-

erated in the lens 71 as any light passes through the lens 71. Consequently, there is the possibility that the light reflected from any point (including the point P3) near the point P1, as well as the light reflected from the point P3, may be applied to the light-receiving surface of the photoelectric conversion element 73. Thus, the conversion element 73 generates a pixel signal which is superposed with the components corresponding to the stray lights resulting from the lights reflected from points other than the point P1.

This problems will be described in greater detail, with reference to Figs. 8A, 8B, and 9.

Fig. 8A illustrates the case where a white line on a black background is to be read. As shown in the figure, the point P1 is on the white line so that the white line may be read. However, the light reflected from any point within a circle S, the center of which is the point P1, are focused on the photoelectric conversion element 73 because of the characteristics of the rod lens 71. Hence, the lights reflected from those parts S1 and S2 of the black background which are within the circle S are also applied through the lens 71 to the photoelectric conversion element 73. The element 73 therefore receives less light than in the case where no dark parts of an image are located within the circle S as is illustrated in Fig. 8B. As a result, as is shown in Fig. 9, the voltage OA output by the element 73 is lower than the voltage OB the element 73 should generate if no dark parts of an image were located within the circle S.

Thus, although the point P1 is placed on the white line to read the line, the voltage output by the transducer element 73 changes in accordance with the condition of those parts of the image which are located near the point P1. As a consequence, the pixel signal output by the element 73 is one influenced by the parts of the image which are near the reading position.

The object of the invention is to provide a contact-type image sensor which can generate a signal faithfully representing to a part of an image, which is located at a reading position, by reducing the influence of the other parts of the image which are located near the reading position.

The object is attained by a contact-type image which comprises:

a light source for applying light to an document from which to read an image;

photoelectric conversion means for generating electric signals from incident light;

an optical system for guiding to the photoelectric conversion means the light applied from the light source and reflected from a predetermined position on the document; and

light-shielding means for reducing an amount of light which is other than the light reflected from

the predetermined position and which is incident to the optical system.

Also, the object of the invention is attained by a contact-type image sensor which comprises:

an document table for supporting an document from which to read an image;

a light source for applying light to the document supported on the document table;

photoelectric conversion means for generating electric signals from incident light;

support means having a wall extending linearly to the document table;

an optical system secured to the wall of the support means, for guiding to the photoelectric conversion means the light applied from the light source and reflected from a predetermined position on the document; and

light-shielding means for reducing an amount of light which is reflected from a position closer to the light source than the predetermined position and which is incident to the optical system.

This invention can be more fully understood from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a sectional view showing a contact-type image sensor according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is an enlarged view illustrating the main part of the image sensor shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a sectional view showing a contact-type image sensor according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a sectional view showing a contact-type image sensor according to a third embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 5 is a sectional view illustrating a contact-type image sensor according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 6 is a sectional view showing a contact-type image sensor according to a fifth embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 7A is a diagram representing the ideal characteristics which each rod lens incorporated in a conventional contact-type image sensor needs to have;

Fig. 7B is a diagram representing the characteristics of rod lens incorporated in a conventional contact-type image sensor;

Fig. 8A is a diagram showing that part of an document having a white line on the black background, from which an image is read by one photoelectric conversion element of a conventional contact-type image sensor;

Fig. 8B is a diagram showing that part of an document or a blank sheet of paper, from which to read an image by the conversion element of the conventional contact-type image sensor; and

Fig. 9 is a graph representing the voltage the conversion element generates from the light reflected from the part of the document shown in Fig. 8A, and the voltage the conversion element generates from the light reflected from the part of the document shown in Fig. 8B.

Embodiments of the invention will be described, with reference to the accompanying drawings.

First Embodiment

Fig. 1 is a sectional view showing a contact-type image sensor according to the first embodiment of the invention. As shown in the figure, the image sensor comprises an LED array 1, a support 3, a glass plate 4, a rod-lens array 5, a line sensor 6, a terminal 8, a circuit board 9, a connector 10, and light-shielding layers 11a and 11b.

The LED array 1 applies light to the document 2 placed on the glass plate 4. The LED array 1 is comprises a number of LEDs, has a length greater than the reading width of the document 2, and is fastened to the support 3.

The support 3 is a little longer than the LED array 1. It has a cross section shaped like letter X as is shown in Fig. 1, and consists of sensor-holding portions 3a and 3b, an LED-holding portion 3c, a lens-holding portion 3d, and plate-holding portion 3e and 3f. The portion 3c extends upwards, outwardly and slantwise from the sensor-holding portion 3a. The lens-holding portion 3d extends vertically from the upper end of the sensor-holding portion 3b. The plate-holding portion 3e is connected to the upper end of the LED-holding portion 3c. The plate-holding portion 3f extends outwardly and horizontally from the upper end of the portion 3d.

The glass plate 4 allows a good passage of light. It is fastened to the plate-holding portions 3e and 3f of the support 3. The plate 4 serves as an document table, on which the document 2 is placed.

The rod-lens array 5 comprises a predetermined number of rod lens. Each rod lens is of so-called "refractive index distributed type" whose refractive index continuously decreases from the center toward the periphery in the radial direction. Further, each rod lens has two focal points which are located at the same distance from the midpoint on the axis of the lens. The rod lenses are arranged side by side, with their optical axes extending parallel to one another. The rod-lens array 5 is fastened to the lens-holding portion 3d of the support 3. It is positioned such that the optical axes of the lenses extend at right angles to the upper surface of the glass plate 4, that the first focal point of each rod lens is located at a point P close to the

upper surface of the glass plate 4, and that the rod lenses are juxtaposed in the lengthwise direction of the support 3.

The line sensor 6 comprises a number of photoelectric conversion elements 7 arranged linearly and is designed to a serial image signal which consists of the signals generated by the elements 7. The sensor 6 is held by the sensor-holding portions 3a and 3b of the support 3, such that the light-receiving surfaces of the elements 7 are located at the second focal points of the rod lenses, respectively. The sensor 6 is electrically connected by the terminal 8 to the circuit board 9.

On the circuit board 9 there are formed various electronic circuits, among which are a circuit for driving the line sensor 6 and a circuit for processing the serial signal output by the sensor 6. The connector 10 is mounted on the circuit board 9, for supplying and receiving signals to and from a facsimile device or the like with which the contact-type image sensor is used in combination.

The light-shielding layers 11a and 11b formed on the lower surface of the glass plate 4, spaced apart from each other for a distance L. They covers the entire lower surface of the plate 4 except for a rectangular region having a width of L. In other words, they defines a rectangular slit which has a width of L and which extends parallel to the rod-lens array 5. The layers 11a and 11b may be plates or films made of opaque material and adhered to the lower surface of the glass plate 4. Alternatively, they may be formed by coating or printing opaque paint on the lower surface of the glass plate 4.

In operation, the light-shielding layers 11a and 11b shield the lights which have been reflected from points Pa and Pb deviated from the point P, i.e., the reading position or the first focal point any rod lens of the array 5, preventing them from reaching the rod-lens array 5. The layers 11a and 11b shield almost all lights that may generate stray light in the rod lens; a very small amount of stray light is generated, if any, in the rod-lens array 5. As a result, the leakage of lights reflected from points near the point P (i.e., the reading position), into each photoelectric conversion element 7 is minimized. Hence, the pixel signal generated by the element 7 and representing that part of an image which is located at the point P is little influenced by the parts of the image which are located near the point P. In other words, the element 7 outputs a pixel signal faithfully representing that part of the image which is located at the point P.

The gap L between the light-shielding layers 11a and 11b is made as short as possible, but long enough to allow light reflected from the point P to reach each rod lens in so sufficient an amount that the element 7 generates a complete pixel signal.

Second Embodiment

Fig. 3 is a sectional view showing a contact-type image sensor according to a second embodiment of the present invention. In Fig. 3, those of the components which are identical to those shown in Fig. 1 are designated at the same reference numerals. And the identical components will not be described in detail.

The second embodiment differs from the first in that only one light-shielding layer, i.e., a layer 11a opposing the LED array 1, is used, employing no layer equivalent to the light-shielding layer 11b. With the second embodiment having this specific structure, as well, it is possible to reduce the leakage of light beams reflected from points near the point P (i.e., the reading position), into each photoelectric conversion element 7. As a result, the element 7 outputs a pixel signal faithfully representing that part of the image which is located at the point P.

However, the leakage of lights reflected from points near the point P into each conversion element 7 is slightly greater than in the first embodiment since no use is made of a layer equivalent to the layer 11b. Nonetheless, the leakage of these lights is decreased far more than in the conventional contact-type image sensor. This is because the light-shielding layer 11b is located farther from the LED array 1 than the light-shielding layer 11a and, thus, receives less light reflected from the glass plate 4 than does the light-shielding layer 11a.

Third Embodiment

Fig. 4 is a sectional view showing a contact-type image sensor according to a third embodiment of the present invention. In Fig. 4, those of the components which are identical to those shown in Fig. 1 are designated at the same reference numerals. And the identical components will not be described in detail.

The third embodiment differs from the first in that the light-shielding layers 11a and 11d extend upwards from the opposing sides of the rod-lens array 5. With the third embodiment having this structure, as well, it is possible to reduce the leakage of light beams reflected from points near the point P into each photoelectric conversion element 7. The element 7, therefore, outputs a pixel signal faithfully representing that part of the image which is located at the point P.

The light-shielding layers 11a and 11b have as gr at a height as possible, but low enough to allow light reflected from the point P to reach each rod lens in so sufficient an amount that the element 7 generates a complete pixel signal.

Fourth Embodiment

It is demanded that a contact-type image sensor be small-sized for particular uses. Fig. 5 is a sectional view of a contact-type image sensor which is small and is a fourth embodiment of the invention. In Fig. 5, those of the components which are identical to those shown in Fig. 1 are designated at the same reference numerals. And the identical components will not be described in detail.

The fourth embodiment comprises an LED array 1, a glass plate 4, a rod-lens array 5, a line sensor 6, a terminal 8, a circuit board 9, a connector 10, a light-shielding layer 11a, and a support 12.

The support 12 is identical in structure to the support 3 shown in Fig. 1, except that a vertical wall 12a replaces the sensor-holding portion 3b, the lens-holding portion 3d and the plate-holding portion 3f. In other words, the left half of the support 12 is identical to the left half of the support 3 (Fig. 1).

The upper end of the vertical wall 12a supports the glass plate 4. The rod-lens array 5 is secured to the middle portion of the wall 12a. The lower end of the wall 12a holds the line sensor 6. Thus does the wall 12a functions as a plate-holding portion, a lens-holding portion, and a sensor-holding portion.

Since the vertical wall 12a replaces the sensor-holding portion 3b, the lens-holding portion 3d and the plate-holding portion 3f, the support 12a is less broad than the support 3 (Fig. 1) by the distance for which the portions 3b and 3f extend sideways.

As shown in Fig. 5, only one light-shielding layer 11a is formed on the lower surface of the glass plate 4. Hence, the layer 11a shields the lights reflected from those of the points near the point P (i.e., the reading position) which are located closer to the LED array 1, preventing them from reaching the rod-lens array 5. As a result, the leakage of light beams reflected from points near the point P into each photoelectric conversion element 7 is minimized. The element 7 therefore outputs a pixel signal faithfully representing that part of the image which is located at the point P.

Fifth Embodiment

Fig. 6 is a sectional view showing a contact-type image sensor according to a fifth embodiment of this invention. In Fig. 6, those of the components which are identical to those shown in Figs. 1, 4, and 5 are designated at the same reference numerals. And the identical components will not be described in detail.

The fifth embodiment is identical to the fourth embodiment (Fig. 5), except that a vertical light-shielding layer 11a is secured to one side (i.e., the left side) of the rod-lens array 6, not formed on the glass plate 4. The layer 11a extends upwards from the array 6 and is located near the LED array 1. With the third embodiment having this structure, too, it is possible to reduce the leakage of lights reflected from points near the point P into each photoelectric conversion element 7. The element 7, therefore, outputs a pixel signal faithfully representing that part of the image which is located at the point P.

The present invention is not limited to the embodiments described above. For example, the invention may be applied to a contact-type image sensor which is incorporated in an apparatus such as a facsimile device, by arranging individual components, i.e., LED array 1, line sensor 6, rod-lens array 5, light-shielding layers (11a, 11b, 11c, 11d), within that apparatus.

Claims

1. A contact-type image sensor comprising:
 - a light source (1) for applying light to an document (2) from which to read an image;
 - photoelectric conversion means (7) for generating electric signals from incident light;
 - an optical system (5) for guiding to said photoelectric conversion means (7) the light applied from said light source (1) and reflected from a predetermined position on the document (2); and
 - light-shielding means (11a, 11b, 11c, 11d) for reducing an amount of light which is other than the light reflected from the predetermined position and which is incident to said optical system.
2. The contact-type image sensor according to claim 1, characterized in that said light-shielding means (11a, 11b) is formed on a lower surface of a transparent document table.
3. The contact-type image sensor according to claim 2, characterized in that said light-shielding means includes at least two light-shielding members (11a, 11b) which are spaced apart from each other and arranged on opposite sides of the predetermined position.
4. The contact-type image sensor according to claim 2, characterized in that said light-shielding means includes one light-shielding member (11a) which is located to said light source (1) than the predetermined position.

5. The contact-type image sensor according to claim 1, characterized in that said light-shielding means (11c, 11d) is secured to said optical system (5) and located at a light-receiving side thereof. 5

6. The contact-type image sensor according to claim 5, characterized in that said light-shielding means includes at least two light-shielding members (11c, 11d) which are spaced apart from each other and arranged on opposite sides of the predetermined position. 10

7. The contact-type image sensor according to claim 5, characterized in that said light-shielding means includes one light-shielding member (11c) which is located to said light source than the predetermined position. 15

8. A contact-type image sensor comprising: 20
 - an document table (4) for supporting an document (2) from which to read an image;
 - a light source (1) for applying light to the document (2) supported on said document table (4); 25
 - photoelectric conversion means (7) for generating electric signals from incident light;
 - support means (12) having a wall (12a) extending linearly to said document table (4);
 - an optical system (5) secured to the wall (12a) of said support means (12), for guiding to said photoelectric conversion means (7) the light applied from said light source (1) and reflected from a predetermined position on the document (2); and 30
 - light-shielding means (11a, 11c) for reducing an amount of light which is reflected from a position closer to said light source (1) than the predetermined position and which is incident to said optical system (5). 35

9. The contact-type image sensor according to claim 8, characterized in that said light-shielding means (11a) is formed on a lower surface of a transparent document table (4). 40

10. The contact-type image sensor according to claim 8, characterized in that said light-shielding means (11c) is secured to said optical system (5) and located at a light-receiving side thereof. 45

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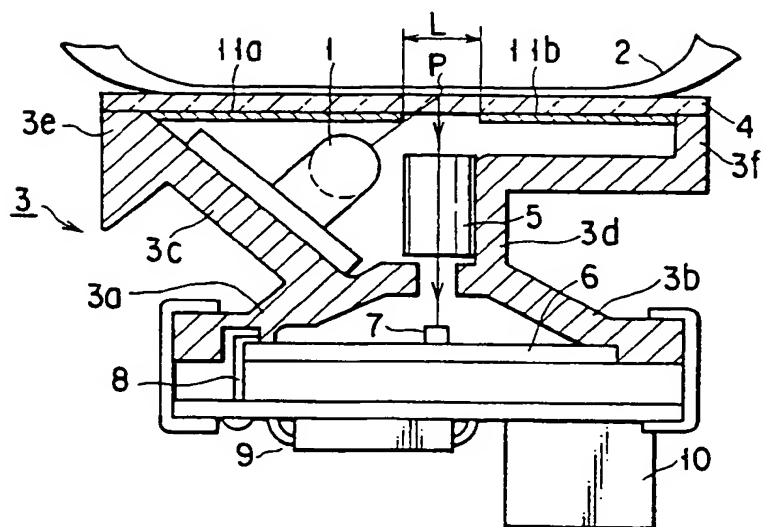


FIG. 1

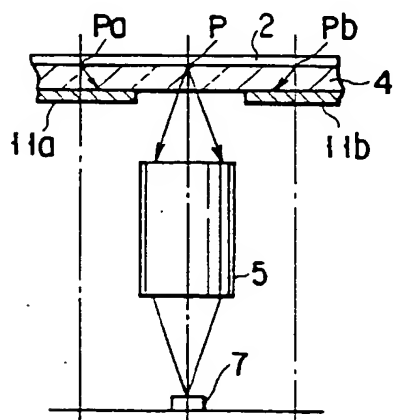


FIG. 2

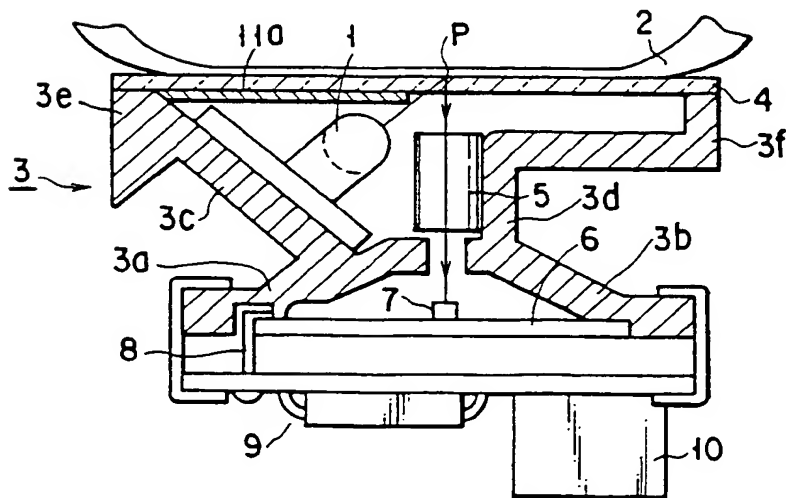


FIG. 3

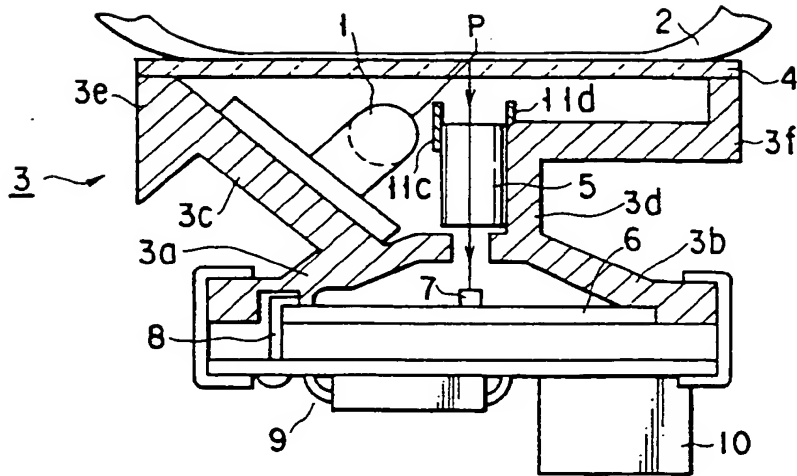


FIG. 4

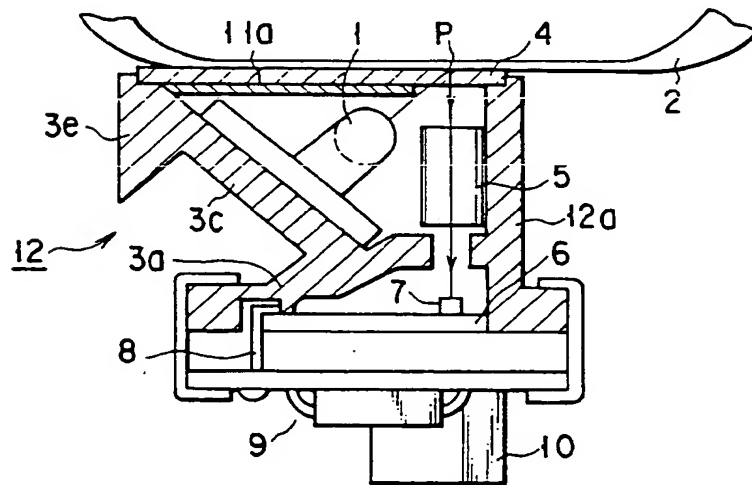


FIG. 5

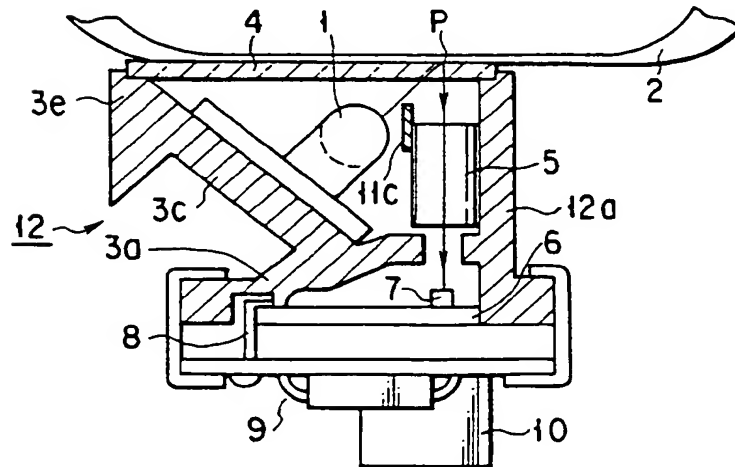


FIG. 6

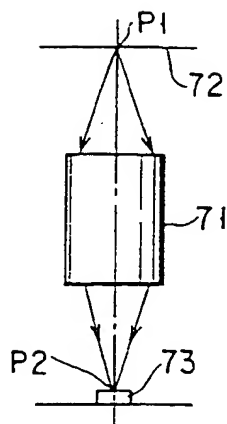


FIG. 7A

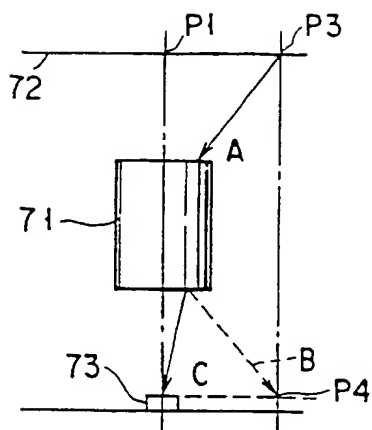


FIG. 7B

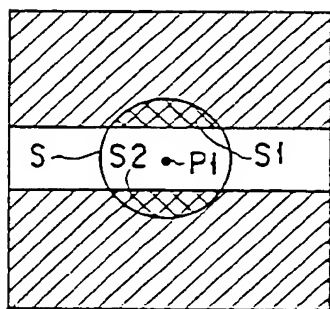


FIG. 8A

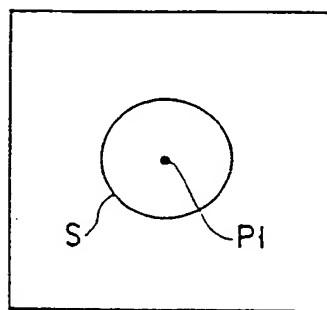


FIG. 8B

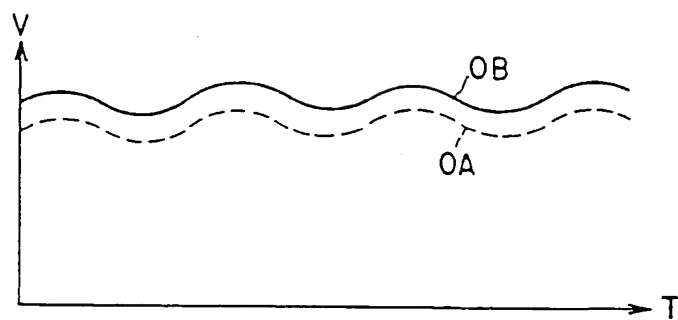


FIG. 9



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 93 10 2552

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.5)
Y A	EP-A-0 465 768 (MITSUBISHI) * page 2, column 1, line 14 - line 54 * * figure 1 * ---	1-4 8	H04N1/028
Y	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 8, no. 243 (E-277)(1680) 8 November 1984 & JP-A-59 122 273 (CANON) 14 July 1984 * abstract *	1-4	
A	EP-A-0 368 681 (SHARP) * page 3, column 3, line 47 - page 4, column 5, line 38 * * page 5, column 8, line 3 - line 12 * * figures 1,7 * ---	1-10	
A	JP-A-62 026 971 (HITACHI) 4 February 1987 * abstract * -----	1,5,6,8, 10	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.5)
			H04N
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 29 APRIL 1993	Examiner VAN DER ZAAL R.
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons ----- & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

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